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## Third Committee

**Summary record of the 27th meeting**
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 19 October 2000, at 10 a.m.

*Chairperson:* Ms. Gittens-Joseph ..... (Trinidad and Tobago)

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* Items which the Committee has decided to consider together.

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.*

**Agenda item 112: Elimination of racism and racial discrimination** *(continued)* (A/55/18 and Add.1, A/55/203, A/55/266, A/55/285, A/55/304, A/55/307 and A/55/459)

**Agenda item 113: Right of peoples to self-determination** *(continued)* (A/55/176 and Add.1 and A/55/334)

1. **Mr. Simón Padrés** (Argentina) said that his delegation shared the concerns expressed by the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance (A/55/304) about the resurgence of racist violence in certain countries and the disturbing growth of ethnocentrism in various regions of the world. Moreover, recognizing the important role of civil society in the struggle against racism and xenophobia, Argentina encouraged non-governmental organizations to pursue their efforts. With regard to the persistent use of the Internet as a means of incitement to racial hatred and xenophobia, Argentina wished to express once again its unswerving rejection of that phenomenon, which relied on a loophole in international regulations.

2. Racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia called for concerted action from the international community. The World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, to be held in 2001, would offer a unique opportunity for a better understanding of the causes of those phenomena and for a review of strategies to eliminate them. It was also important to continue to mobilize public opinion, States and civil society regarding that manifestation. Argentina supported all initiatives related to preparations for the World Conference, and noted that activities involving Latin America and the Caribbean would take place in the following months in Chile. Argentina also commended the initiative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in proposing for signature by world leaders a Declaration entitled "Tolerance and Diversity – A Vision for the 21st Century", which the President of Argentina had been very pleased to sign.

3. Argentina was fully committed to the obligations it had assumed by signing, towards the end of the 1960s, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Its Constitution guaranteed the full exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms by all its inhabitants. As a country of immigration, Argentina welcomed foreigners, and that spirit of openness had been embodied in the first Constitution of 1853 and in subsequent amendments. In 1988, the Argentine Congress had adopted, with the unanimity of all political parties, a law banning discrimination in any form, including on the basis of race.

4. Since 1995, a public body, the National Institute to Combat Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism, had been engaged in combating all manifestations of oppression and intolerance through education, information and dialogue. Within the Institute, an organ was entrusted with receiving and considering complaints and assisting victims of discrimination. The Institute was also responsible for implementing the national plan for action against all forms of discrimination adopted by Argentina in the context of the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, and with an eye to the World Conference. In education, the plan envisaged a four-year programme designed, inter alia, to train teachers, develop educational materials for use in schools and the community, and introduce new elements for combating discrimination into school curricula. The Institute organized, in collaboration with the University of Buenos Aires and the expanded Montevideo group of universities in the countries of the southern cone, an inter-university conference on racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, to be held in Buenos Aires in March 2001.

5. Lastly, stressing the decisive role of educational and consciousness-raising campaigns, he expressed the hope that Member States would give full attention to that aspect during the World Conference.

6. **Mr. Darwish** (Egypt) expressed his delegation's support for the statement made by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. He hoped that the World Conference to be held in South Africa in 2001 would have significant impact on action to combat all forms of racial discrimination. Egypt appealed to the political will of all States to mobilize all efforts and all the necessary resources to ensure the success of the Conference. It would associate itself with the regional preparatory work of the Conference by adopting or proposing initiatives designed to strengthen mutual respect among peoples and races and

founded on fundamental human values, freedoms and characteristics.

7. Human diversity must be a source of enrichment, and the United Nations, as the body most representative of that diversity, must endeavour to promote the values of freedom, justice and tolerance while respecting the different characteristics of all societies, in a spirit of dialogue.

8. Egypt was disturbed by the information submitted by the Special Rapporteur in his report (A/55/304) concerning the growth of extremism, discrimination and xenophobia and the use of the Internet in certain Western countries to disseminate racist theories. It hoped that the World Conference would condemn the tendency to blame immigrants for unemployment and the loss of cultural cohesion. It called on all States to adopt legislative measures to dispose of such ideas and organizations. Egypt also appealed to States which had not yet done so to ratify or accede to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, and also to implement it and take the necessary steps to protect marginalized groups.

9. Turning to item 113, he noted that the States Members of the United Nations, ever since its foundation, had considered that their right to self-determination was not only a collective right but also one of the founding principles of international law contained in the Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the various international human-rights instruments.

10. For more than half a century, Egypt had supported the Palestinian people in their struggle for self-determination. The United Nations, as the voice of the international community and the symbol of international legality, had placed an indelible mark on Arab-Israeli relations through its action in favour of peace. Its resolutions remained the frame of reference for ensuring a just, lasting and peaceful settlement of the situation in the Middle East and for achieving recognition of the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination.

11. Egypt called on Israel to end its occupation of Arab territories and to restore them in the context of a just and lasting peace and on the basis of United Nations resolutions and the principle of "land for peace". It urged Israel to honour its commitments and respect the agreements concluded with a view to promoting the peace process, in the interest of all peoples of the region. It appealed to Israel to enable the Palestinian people to exercise their legitimate rights, including the right to establish a State. Egypt opposed any action contrary to peace in the region and hoped for a just, balanced and peaceful solution that would enable the peoples of the region to live in peace and save future generations from war. Lastly, his delegation hoped that the draft resolution on the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, which it would submit – as it had done at previous sessions of the General Assembly – would be co-sponsored and adopted by Member States.

12. **Mr. Wibisono** (Indonesia), speaking on item 112, said that his delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. He welcomed the progress being made towards convening the World Conference, and said that Indonesia fully endorsed the Conference as an occasion to address one of the most egregious violations of human rights.

13. Indonesia looked forward to the drawing up of a declaration and programme of action for the Conference, which should offer clear guidance and clear indications of what the family of nations hoped for and could achieve. It suggested that the draft declaration should recognize the global scope of the problem and the need for a concerted global response. It took note of the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination for elements to include in a programme of action. Indonesia strongly urged that every effort should be made to ensure that the programme of action of the Conference did not fall victim to inattention. His delegation took note of the expert seminar on racism, refugees and multi-ethnic States, held in Geneva towards the end of 1999, and found it encouraging that activities continued to be carried out in the context of the revised Programme of Action for the Third Decade, given the lack of commitment of the international community to implementing the programmes of action of the previous two Decades. Indonesia concurred with the observation made by the expert seminar that questions of racism and racial discrimination were complex and demanded comprehensive solutions that not only included legal provisions but also addressed social, economic and cultural issues.

14. Indonesia had signed and ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All

Forms of Racial Discrimination in 1999. A team of legal experts was continuing to review national laws so as to remove all discriminatory aspects. Indonesia was committed to that process, which would take time. It would, however, continue to address the socio-economic undercurrent of ethnic and religious unrest and was confident that through dialogue and education those problems would be resolved.

15. As a party to the Convention, Indonesia supported the work and activities of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and noted the efforts being made by the Committee to implement early-warning measures to prevent problems from escalating into conflicts. It hoped that the Committee, after gaining more experience in that regard, would be better able to support the initiatives of States parties.

16. The use of new technologies to disseminate racial hatred was particularly disturbing. Member States must reach a consensus on how to address that problem, which cut across the legal and social boundaries of States. At the same time, the Internet offered a medium for communicating the message of tolerance and understanding and could be better used as a channel for education and for combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

17. His delegation shared the concerns expressed by the Special Rapporteur over the situation in Indonesia. But although exploitation of ethnic differences in Indonesia might at first seem to be developing in a worrying manner, he would suggest that existing problems were not essentially racial or ethnic but rather social and economic. The root causes were poverty, ignorance and the economic crisis, and must be addressed if the problem was to be solved. As a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country, Indonesia would not accept such behaviour and condemned it wherever and whenever it manifested itself.

18. Indonesia, which was undergoing a profound transformation towards democracy, had opted to develop a socio-political system that responded to the interests of the people, to accelerate economic recovery and to preserve social harmony. Its national vision in the new millennium was the preservation of democratic pluralism and a modern State that provided opportunities for all its people, regardless of ethnic, religious or other differences.

19. **Ms. Fritsche** (Liechtenstein), speaking on item 113, said that self-determination could not be dismissed as a principle of the past, and its significance lay not only in the field of decolonization. That position had been reinforced by recent events, as in East Timor and Kosovo. There was no conflict between sovereignty and territorial integrity on the one hand and self-determination on the other, and as a small country, Liechtenstein recognized the fundamental importance of sovereignty and territorial integrity. However, as pointed out in the 1970 Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, independence was only one of the many ways in which the right of self-determination might be fulfilled. The majority of ongoing armed conflicts were taking place within States, frequently owing to a lack of dialogue with the community concerned, which lacked political representation. Liechtenstein considered that the granting of partial self-government, within the framework of the territorial integrity of the State, might enable the escalation of violence and the disintegration of States to be avoided.

20. In that context, in accordance with the culture of prevention advocated by the Secretary-General and in order to carry out increased preventive action, as called for in the report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (the Brahimi report – A/55/305-S/2000/809), the United Nations ought to engage in an open discussion on the role that self-determination played in armed conflicts.

21. In addition to promoting its ideas within the United Nations system, Liechtenstein was funding a research programme on self-determination at Princeton University, and would shortly be transforming the programme into an institute.

22. **Mr. Rodríguez** (Cuba), speaking on item 112, urged all States to implement immediately article 4 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, by prohibiting all racist organizations and condemning racist propaganda. He deplored the growth of new forms of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia in various parts of the world. In Western and Eastern Europe and North America, far-right ideas and neo-fascist theories were gaining ground, propagated by political parties with racist programmes which, in certain countries, even enjoyed State subsidies.

23. Thus, it was in the developed world that racist ideas – now carried by the new information highways, especially the Internet – found their largest audience. The unequal distribution of wealth, exacerbated by the complete freeing of markets and by globalization – a powerful factor for individualism – was largely responsible for the resurgence of racism. Discrimination against racial or ethnic minorities was supplemented by rabid intolerance of immigrants, the true sacrificial victims of the evils prevalent in developed societies. They not only had to endure physical or verbal abuse from far-right militants but also had to suffer institutional racism and clashes with increasingly repressive police forces.

24. Referring to the Special Rapporteur's latest report (A/55/304), he noted that, in the United States, institutionalized racism existed and that the exercise of justice reflected racial prejudices. Thus, whereas the police officers who had murdered Amadou Diallo, an immigrant from Guinea, had been acquitted, Shaka Sankofa, a defender of the rights of the African-American population, had been sentenced to death for a crime he had not committed. In the United States, 18,000 executions had taken place but only 38 whites had been sentenced to death for the murder of blacks. In Pennsylvania, where African-Americans represented only 9 per cent of the population, 62 per cent of those condemned to death were blacks. In the United States, where the average annual income of white families was virtually double that of black families, blacks had a 13-times greater chance of being condemned to death than whites for problems relating to drugs; yet there were 5 times more whites among drug traffickers and more than 60 per cent of women prisoners were of African-American or Hispanic origin.

25. As had been confirmed by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the difficult situation of the Roma minorities in various Eastern European countries continued to cause concern.

26. The forthcoming World Conference should therefore provide the opportunity to learn from history and to provide for compensation to victims of racism and their descendants, especially persons who had been or were victims of the consequences of capitalist slavery and the trans-Atlantic slave trade for commercial ends, practices which should be characterized as crimes against humanity.

27. **Mr. Yu Wenzhe** (China), recalling that racism was one of the most flagrant violations of human rights, said that his delegation welcomed the efforts of the international community to eliminate it, especially its great victory in abolishing apartheid in South Africa. But at a time of globalization, racism still existed, and accordingly China welcomed the World Conference to be held in South Africa in September 2001. It was not only within a country that racism existed; the unjust international political and economic order also led to discrimination and inequality among nations. The Conference should contribute, therefore, to establishing a just and equitable new international political and economic order and thereby create the necessary conditions for the eradication of racism. China, ready to join in such efforts, hoped that the United Nations Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as the relevant bodies of the United Nations system, would provide the necessary human, material and financial resources for the preparatory work of the Conference.

28. With regard to the right to self-determination, the subject of item 113, China considered that right to be a sacred principle. Each people should be able to choose its own political and social system and its own economic model and path of development, to oppose foreign aggression and interference in its internal affairs, and to safeguard its sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. In practice, however, certain powerful countries resorted to political pressure, economic sanctions or even armed invasion to interfere in the affairs of a smaller State, trampling upon the Charter and impeding the right to self-determination. At the same time, the international community must firmly condemn all those who openly advocated the splitting of sovereign States under the guise of self-determination.

29. The right to self-determination lay at the heart of the constant violent conflicts in the Middle East. China condemned the use of heavy weapons against Palestinian civilians. It hoped that the agreement reached at the Sharm el-Sheikh Summit Meeting would be implemented, that all the parties concerned would exercise restraint and cease all speeches and actions not conducive to the peace process, and that they would invoke the relevant United Nations resolutions, following the principle of land for peace, in order to persevere in negotiations while strictly abiding by agreements already reached.

30. **Mr. Erwa** (Sudan) said that the past few years had witnessed the growth of new forms of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia in various parts of the world, directed especially against immigrants, refugees and ethnic minorities. They were manifested in the desecration or destruction of houses of prayer, in acts of terrorism directed against foreigners, even in ethnic cleansing or genocidal acts, and were accompanied by declarations expounding the superiority of a particular ethnic or other group. Yet the existing international machinery was not adequate to extirpate racist propaganda. In the light, for example, of the proliferation of Internet sites carrying messages of intolerance, there was a need to adopt appropriate legislation, at the national and international levels, that would condemn the authors of such messages. The Sudan, which had a tradition of peaceful coexistence, also invited the international community to pursue efforts to curb those phenomena through awareness campaigns in schools, universities and houses of prayer.

31. In the light of that situation, the Sudan was following with interest the preparations for the World Conference and the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination. It intended to participate fully in the Conference, which it hoped would adopt recommendations and a programme of action that were effective.

32. With regard to item 113, the Sudan wished to state that its defence of the right of peoples to self-determination must not be used to encourage the dismemberment of States, justify interference in their internal affairs or infringe on their sovereignty, territorial integrity or political unity. Indeed, a false interpretation of that principle could aggravate conflicts, bring social upheaval and constitute a threat to international peace and security. The Sudan, for its part, in accordance with the African conception of the right to self-determination, wished to confine the exercise of that right to peoples subjected to the yoke of colonialism and foreign occupation. In that regard, recent events in the Occupied Palestinian Territory were merely the expression of racism in its worst forms. That was why it was necessary to implement the relevant United Nations resolutions on the granting to the Palestinian people of their legitimate right to self-determination, a people that had suffered for so long under the yoke of Israeli occupation, with the tragic consequences that were well known, especially with regard to children.

33. Respect for the integrity of States and for their right to self-determination was also threatened, however, by the growing recourse to mercenaries, who either acted individually or set up legally registered companies which offered security services and specialized in various types of activities. The Sudan, noting the report of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the question of the use of mercenaries (A/55/334), welcomed the fact that the General Assembly had requested the Secretary-General to invite Governments to propose elements of a clearer legal definition of mercenaries that would allow for more efficient prevention of mercenary activities and the adoption of national legislation to that effect.

34. **Ms. Lovell** (Antigua and Barbuda), speaking on behalf of the countries of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), noted that the Charter affirmed that the purposes of the United Nations were, inter alia, "to achieve international cooperation (...) in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms without distinction as to race, sex, language and religion". She added that article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights stipulated that "all human beings were born free and equal in dignity and rights", and noted that Member States had undertaken to guarantee respect for those rights. Nevertheless, the ugly spectre of racism was still prevalent, as seen, for instance, in the misuse of the Internet by those wishing to spread a culture of intolerance and fear. The States members of the Caribbean Community therefore supported the conclusions of the seminar on the role of the Internet, held in Geneva in 1997, to the effect that the States Members of the United Nations should establish international juridical measures to prohibit racism from the Internet while respecting individual rights such as freedom of speech. The CARICOM countries also supported the objectives of the forthcoming World Conference, as set forth in General Assembly resolution 52/111; encouraged the international community to contribute generously to the Fund for Voluntary Contributions to the World Conference; hoped that the Conference would provide a forum for the universal ratification of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; encouraged the active participation of

non-governmental organizations in the Conference; and called on all States to set up, at the national and regional levels, structures responsible for coordinating preparations for the Conference and for sensitizing public opinion to its importance.

35. Accordingly, the CARICOM countries supported the information campaign mounted by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in close collaboration with the Department of Public Information of the United Nations Secretariat. They also endorsed the relentless efforts of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance to uncover both institutionalized and indirect forms of racism and to give voice to the members of the international family who would normally be voiceless.

36. **Mr. Tessema** (Ethiopia), speaking on item 112 – which, as he recalled, was delicate and controversial – hoped that the dialogue would be pursued within the Committee. The root causes of racism, xenophobia and intolerance were many and varied. Their manifestations were rapidly growing in complexity, to the point where the Internet was now being misused to disseminate racist propaganda. In a number of societies, those phenomena were a major cause of instability, especially since some national legislations relating to the right of asylum and the free movement of persons reflected xenophobia and since, in many parts of the world, laws criminalizing racial discrimination were inadequately enforced. Notwithstanding its importance, the issue of racism had not received priority attention, as witnessed by the failure to properly implement, owing to insufficient resources, the Programme of Action for the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination. Consequently, Ethiopia hoped that the World Conference to be held in 2001 would lead to recommendations for strengthening existing machinery and to the adoption of additional measures. However, all endeavours to tackle the pernicious use of the Internet needed to be compatible with the right to freedom of expression enshrined in article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

37. Ethiopia was extremely concerned over that question, in the light of the racist acts perpetrated by the Eritrean regime against Ethiopians living in Eritrea. The past two years had been a time of systematic violations of the human rights of many Ethiopians living under Eritrean occupation. Indeed, in some cases those violations reached the magnitude of crimes against humanity and genocide. The atrocities had been further intensified after the Eritrean army of aggression had been evicted from all the areas it had been occupying since May 1998. Attacks were increasingly perpetrated against Ethiopian civilians, whether women, children, the elderly, the sick or the internally displaced. Thousands languished in concentration camps, many had been evicted from their homes and farmlands, even stripped of their identities, and those who had resisted had been tortured or killed in the most barbaric way. Since the outbreak of the Eritrean aggression, over 55,000 Ethiopians had been deported from Eritrea, and most witness accounts testified to summary executions, rape, arbitrary detentions, disappearances, torture and illegal confiscation of private property, all because of the victims' ethnic origin. The Eritrean authorities had imposed Draconian requirements on the Ethiopians who tried to leave for their homeland, and those who did had to cross a precarious war zone and heavily mined border crossings without even the presence of the International Committee of the Red Cross, which had appealed for the return of the deportees. Consequently, his delegation once again appealed to the international community to stop the Eritrean regime from continuing to perpetrate brutality and crimes against innocent Ethiopian civilians as a weapon of vengeance for its humiliating defeat on all battlefronts.

38. **Ms. Šimonović** (Croatia), speaking on item 112, said that all actions taken to date to combat racism were not sufficient and that there was a need to elaborate preventive strategies and campaigns which took into account new forms of racism and xenophobia. Croatia believed that the United Nations had given the right priority to the question in arranging to hold the World Conference in 2001, and welcomed the initiative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in circulating, for the World Conference, a Declaration on Tolerance and Diversity.

39. Croatia hoped that the World Conference would provide the opportunity to make a thorough inventory of achievements in combating racism and the challenges that remained. It also hoped that the Conference would spur a worldwide campaign for preventing and eradicating racism and would adopt a declaration and plan of action containing a comprehensive and innovative set of measures that could be practically implemented. The declaration and

plan of action should deal primarily with refugees and displaced persons, immigrants and migrants, and trafficking in women and children, as the most vulnerable members of society.

40. The preparations for the World Conference were already producing valuable results in terms of stimulating national and regional efforts to prevent and fight against racism and racial discrimination. Croatia was pleased to note that the first regional preparatory meeting at the European level, held at Strasbourg from 11 to 13 October 2000, had been constructive, and was confident that the other regional preparatory meetings would also yield significant results. Croatia would make its contribution to the preparatory process by hosting, in November 2000 in Zagreb, a United Nations expert meeting on gender and racial discrimination organized in conjunction with the Division for the Advancement of Women of the United Nations Secretariat, with the assistance of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

41. At the national level, Croatia had set up a working group comprising government officials and representatives of academia, the media, non-governmental organizations and minorities, mandated exclusively with preparing for the Conference. The working group would then be transformed into a permanent national body for monitoring and combating all forms of intolerance and promoting a comprehensive campaign aimed at combating racism and all forms of racial and ethnic discrimination throughout the country. It had already adopted a series of projects which included publishing an information brochure that detailed all major legal instruments for combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance; organizing seminars to acquaint judges and public prosecutors with the provisions of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and to inform the national minorities in Croatia of international and national instruments on racial discrimination; and organizing forums of non-governmental organizations and expert lectures at primary and secondary schools on racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance.

42. At the legislative level, Parliament had enacted in May 2000 three laws regulating the rights of national minorities. The laws would ensure the implementation of the provisions of the Constitution relating to those rights and would conform to standards adopted by the Council of Europe.

43. **Mr. Priputen** (Slovakia), speaking on item 112, associated himself with the statement made by France on behalf of the European Union but wished to add a few additional remarks. He noted with concern that only 20 per cent of the States parties to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination had made the declaration provided for in article 14, under which a State party could at any time declare that it recognized the competence of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination to receive and consider communications from individuals or groups of individuals within its jurisdiction claiming to be victims of a violation by that State party of any of the rights set forth in the Convention. That was a very low percentage, given the Committee's important role. Slovakia hoped that the forthcoming World Conference would encourage other States to make such a declaration.

44. Slovakia supported the holding of the Conference, which would provide a platform for exchanging ideas and experience and would contribute towards a better understanding of major global issues. It welcomed the results of the European preparatory meeting for the World Conference, recently held in Strasbourg, and was fully prepared to meet the commitments specified in the political declaration adopted in Strasbourg.

45. The National Conference against Racism, held in May 2000 in Bratislava under the patronage of the President of the Slovak Republic, had resulted in an evaluation of the situation with regard to racism in Slovakia, and in recommendations to address those problems. The recommendations were intended mainly for the domestic authorities but were also a part of Slovakia's contribution to the European preparatory meeting and the World Conference.

46. In Slovakia, as in other countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the situation of the Roma minority was a sensitive issue. The Government was taking steps to improve that situation. In 1999, it had appointed a plenipotentiary for Roma affairs, who himself was a member of that minority, and had adopted a strategy for the solution of the problems encountered by the Roma. It had made a budgetary appropriation to support projects under that strategy, run by the State in

cooperation with the non-governmental sector. Moreover, in May 2000, it had adopted an action plan to prevent all forms of discrimination, racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance, covering the period 2000-2001. Thus, Slovakia had come a long way, but the Roma problem remained a complex issue, involving legal, social, economic, cultural and sociological dimensions, and much remained to be done.

47. **Mr. Melenevsky** (Ukraine) welcomed the progress achieved in preparations for the World Conference and the decisions taken by the Preparatory Committee. Ukraine had signed the Declaration on Tolerance and Diversity adopted at the Millennium Summit, which should generate a constructive approach to the Conference, and called on all countries that had not yet done so to do likewise.

48. Ukraine was deeply convinced that preventive measures should be adopted as a matter of priority in the fight against racism and racial intolerance at the international level, and that there was a need to establish an early-warning procedure to enable the United Nations to avert conflicts resulting from racial and ethnic tensions. In that regard, the Commission on Human Rights could play a crucial role, especially by reviewing information and making recommendations.

49. Virtually no country in the world was exempt from racism, racial discrimination and intolerance, the complex causes of which ranged from lack of education and information to social and economic disparities. Governments, which bore primary responsibility for the elimination of racial discrimination, should give greater attention to national legislation and education.

50. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination played an important role in monitoring implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which continued to be a key instrument in that sphere. Given the high probability of future conflict on the grounds of racism and racial discrimination, it was especially important that States should adopt the measures it recommended.

51. In Ukraine, a system of legal guarantees expressly forbade racism and racial discrimination and there were no serious cases of ethnic violence or anti-Semitism. Special importance was attached to the rights of national minorities, which constituted more than a quarter of the population of Ukraine. All citizens were guaranteed the right to profess their religion and participate in the traditional rituals of their communities. Within the boundaries of administrative units densely populated by national minorities, the accepted language of that area could function on an equal level to that of the State language.

52. Turning to item 113, he said that the principle of self-determination, as an inalienable right, should be implemented in conformity with the fundamental principles of international law, such as those embodied in the Charter of the United Nations and the Helsinki Final Act. A clear distinction should be drawn between peoples under colonial or foreign occupation and national minorities living in the territories of modern States. Thus, the right to self-determination should be exercised under three major conditions: adherence to the principles of democracy, the protection of human rights and the rights of national minorities; recognition of the inviolability of State borders; and the peaceful resolution of disputes. In other words, Ukraine accepted the well-known formula for realization of the right to self-determination through autonomy as a possible solution only under specific circumstances.

53. His delegation noted with appreciation the report of the Special Rapporteur on the question of the use of mercenaries (A/55/334), and shared the concern expressed in that document. As a State party since 1993 to the International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries, Ukraine fully assumed its obligation to refrain from any act that would defeat the purpose of that Convention.

54. **Mr. Boisson** (Monaco) said that a State must not authorize the dissemination of racist ideas on the Internet and must take practical measures to suppress it. Switzerland, for example, had decided to make Internet service providers criminally liable and was seeking to convince more liberal States to ensure that access to racist web sites was confined to their national territory. It might be appropriate for Governments to join in efforts to regulate use of the Internet and harmonize the criminal provisions they had adopted or intended to adopt with a view to preventing the exploitation of the Internet for racist purposes. The forthcoming World Conference could provide the occasion for promoting that idea.

55. It was also essential to condemn racism in all its aspects, including economic, social and political, which could consist for example, in preventing a foreigner from enjoying economic and social advantages, excluding minority groups from public life and using racism as an instrument for strengthening a political or economic entity. The international community, and especially the national authorities, had a duty to remain vigilant.

56. He expressed his delegation's gratitude to the High Commissioner for Human Rights, as the Secretary-General of the World Conference, for the part she had played in the regional preparatory meetings and for having organized a meeting to provide information on preparations for the Conference. His delegation looked forward to the draft declaration and programme of action of the Conference, to be submitted to an inter-sessional open-ended working group that would meet in Geneva from 15 to 19 January 2001.

57. The Principality of Monaco, which had acceded to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and remained firmly committed to the struggle against racism and racial discrimination, had co-sponsored the draft resolution relating to the Convention submitted by Belgium and Slovenia. It considered that universal ratification of or accession to the Convention and strict implementation of its provisions were necessary, especially in order to realize the objectives of the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination. States which were not yet party to the Convention could use the occasion of the World Conference to accede to it. The Principality of Monaco felt that it was also essential, in order to combat racism, to make every effort to mobilize public opinion through programmes of awareness-raising, education and above all through the promotion of mutual understanding and tolerance.

58. **Ms. Al-Haj** (Syrian Arab Republic) observed that the fight against racism and racial discrimination in various parts of the world had always been a centre of concern of the United Nations, whose competent bodies were engaged in combating the contemporary forms of racism, xenophobia and intolerance emerging in many societies. In that regard, the World Conference to be held in South Africa in 2001 should provide the international community with a new opportunity to reaffirm its will to eliminate those evils, especially the discrimination, oppression and persecution inflicted upon the Arabs of the occupied Arab territories.

59. Her delegation emphasized once again that the United Nations had been founded on the principles of the right of peoples to freedom, self-determination and the elimination of hegemony and foreign domination, and that Israel's stubborn determination to pursue a policy of occupation, arrogance and racial discrimination and its resort to catchwords and to religious and security myths were the cause of the insecurity and absence of peace in the Middle East.

60. The Syrian Arab Republic had actively supported the struggle of the peoples under colonialism and foreign occupation to become free and exercise their right to self-determination, including its support within the framework of the United Nations – which had affirmed that right in various General Assembly resolutions, the first being resolution 1514 (XV) – and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, whose peoples had borne heavy sacrifices in order to throw off the colonial yoke.

61. Despite the successes achieved and the many resolutions on the Arab-Israeli conflict adopted by its various bodies, the United Nations had not succeeded in enabling the Palestinian people to exercise their legitimate right to self-determination, because of the expansionist policies of Israel, its continued flagrant violation of the Charter and the principles of international and humanitarian law, as well as its refusal to bend to the will of the international community. The Palestinian refugees had been yearning for over half a century to regain their land, from which Israeli occupation forces had expelled them by force of arms, terrorism and massacre.

62. Israel was pursuing the establishment of settlements through a systematic policy to modify the demographic composition of the occupied Arab territories by encouraging Jewish settlers from various regions of the world to replace the Palestinians evicted by Israeli forces from their homes and their land. Thus, Israel was an abhorrent system based on racism, racial discrimination and State terrorism which resorted to the massacre of Palestinian civilians, including children. Television had clearly shown that Israeli forces had killed Palestinian children and young people, and destroyed their homes and property. Israel continued to impose its law on the Arab inhabitants, besieging them and preventing them from exercising

rights guaranteed under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, international law and the Geneva Conventions. It must abandon its policy of discrimination and repression, withdraw from the occupied Arab territories and immediately recognize the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to the creation in their national territory of an independent State with Jerusalem as its capital.

63. The Syrian Arab Republic, deeply attached to the civilized values of cooperation, religious tolerance and the struggle against all forms of colonialism, racism and racial discrimination, had been one of the first States to become a party to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. It was also a party to the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid, the International Convention against Apartheid in Sports and the Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, as well as the anti-slavery conventions.

64. The right to self-determination and the right to fight foreign occupation were fundamental rights for which peoples would continue to struggle. It was necessary to work together in order to realize the aspirations of all peoples for a future of peace, security and stability.

65. **Ms. Molaroni** (San Marino), speaking on item 112, commended South Africa's generous offer to host the World Conference in 2001 and deemed the location a very symbolic one, even though such a conference should not be needed in the twenty-first century. San Marino supported the decision taken by the Commission on Human Rights acting as the Preparatory Committee for the World Conference to draw up a final document with specific goals and objectives as well as timetables for their achievement.

66. Racism was, on the one hand, fear of the unknown – a fear which, in extreme situations, could lead to racial cleansing in the desire to eliminate all differences – and, on the other, a lack of curiosity, patience and understanding vis-à-vis other people. Yet cultures needed diversity to flourish, while racist behaviour stemmed from social pressure, assumptions and misconceptions.

67. San Marino fully subscribed to the principle of non-discrimination as to race, colour, gender, language, religion, political opinion, national or social origin, or birth. It believed that, in order to combat racism where it still existed, steps must be taken to collect and analyse data on racism, educate the younger generation, create public awareness and learn how to live together peacefully, while at the same time adopting laws that severely punished the crimes of intolerance, racism and discrimination.

68. San Marino particularly appreciated the new European-wide information network created in 1999 to carry out research and monitoring activities in cooperation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and supported the excellent work of the Council of Europe. There was an urgent need for action against discrimination on a broad front at national, regional and international levels.

69. **Ms. Pohjankukka** (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies), speaking on item 112, said that the statutes of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement prohibited any consideration of race, sex, class, religion or political opinions. The Movement's activities were rooted in the seven fundamental principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality. Volunteers numbering 97 million around the world worked to uphold those principles in the field, and often had the additional task of eliminating ethnic barriers.

70. The Federation commended the role of young people in promoting tolerance and fighting discrimination. The European network "Minorities and Human Rights in a Changing Europe" had been the foundation for the development of a global youth-leadership-training programme to inculcate a culture of peace, with parallel activities in many countries. Further, the Federation had organized a youth event in Cameroon in September 2000 for the Central African region. The Twenty-seventh International Congress of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, held in November 1999, had adopted a plan of action for the years 2000-2003 which would develop a strategic partnership and new means to meet the needs of vulnerable people and reduce discrimination and violence in societies. To implement the plan, the Federation was working with national societies and with States to foster a climate of tolerance, mutual acceptance and peace. The national societies and the States parties to the Geneva Conventions had pledged to cooperate and take initiatives to promote tolerance, non-violence and respect for cultural diversity. The Federation was

currently considering ways and means of assisting its national societies, and intended to disseminate information on the work done so far.

71. The Federation's Strategy 2010, adopted in October 1999 as the culmination of a two-year process of consultation with national societies, would enable the Federation to redouble its efforts in the struggle against racism. The Strategy, by mobilizing the staff of the national societies, the public and private sectors and members of the various communities, was aimed at influencing behaviour through a better understanding of humanitarian values.

72. **Mr. Howell** (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that ILO was working with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to prepare for the World Conference and would do whatever it could to contribute to a successful outcome. Racism affected the most vulnerable groups of society, and there was recent disturbing evidence of a racial dimension in the incidence of torture and other flagrant abuses of basic human rights. He also noted with concern that modern means of mass communication had become vehicles for fostering racist hate and violence and fomenting religious intolerance. The Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance had highlighted the impact of racial discrimination on employment, encompassing contemporary forms of slavery, child labour and trafficking in human beings. Deeply concerned by the persistence of those phenomena, ILO urged Governments to take steps to ratify and implement ILO Convention No. 29 of 1930, on forced labour, and considered the related phenomenon of trafficking in women and children to be a wholly unacceptable outrage.

73. The elimination of discrimination in employment had been at the core of the mandate of ILO since its inception. In launching its campaign for decent work, ILO sought to promote employment, socio-economic security, fundamental rights at work and free association. It also asserted the right of all women and men to obtain productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. Moreover, at the International Labour Conference in 1998, Governments, employers and workers had adopted the Declaration of Fundamental Rights and Principles at Work. ILO Convention No. 111 of 1958, which outlawed discrimination in employment and occupation specifically on grounds of gender and race, had to date been ratified by 145 countries.

74. Because of the accelerating pace of migration throughout the world, ILO had strengthened its "migration for employment" programme, which advised Governments on issues like the recruitment, protection and return of migrant workers and their families. ILO also advised on the formulation of national migration policies and programmes and on the promotion of new national frameworks for the prevention of discrimination against migrant workers, which always sought to preserve the national and ethnic identity of migrant workers. He also called attention to ILO Convention No. 107, revised by Convention No. 169, of 1989, relating to indigenous and tribal peoples in independent countries.

75. Through close work with Governments and relief agencies, the ILO crisis-response programme helped to create emergency employment in order to assist refugees, thereby helping to build or rehabilitate the basic infrastructure needed for survival and development. Since racial discrimination disproportionately affected women, the achievement of gender equality was also a goal.

76. While technical cooperation could assist Member States that wished to ratify conventions or to apply them more effectively, legal provisions alone were not enough to end racial and ethnic discrimination. Efforts must also include redistribution of social, economic and cultural power by promoting social justice and fairness and by ensuring equal opportunities and participation for all.

*The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.*